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New York

President:	Mr. Churkin	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Verbeke
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Spatafora
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Ettalhi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad
	Viet Nam	Mr. Le Luong Minh

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2008/159)

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08-26870 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2008/159)

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Iceland, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Guéhenno to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2008/159).

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

Before giving him the floor, I wish, on behalf of the members, to welcome the appointment of Mr. Kai Eide as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. I also welcome his presence at this meeting before assuming his important duties in Afghanistan. We look forward to working closely with him and wish him good luck and success in his new and challenging assignment.

I now give the floor to Mr. Guéhenno.

Mr Guéhenno (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking you, Sir, for your initiative of convening this open debate on Afghanistan. The many members who have asked to speak today vividly remind us of how many friends Afghanistan has in the international community, and reflect the determination we all share to help Afghanistan rebuild, reconcile and fulfil the aspirations of the Bonn Agreement and the Afghanistan Compact.

I am pleased to be accompanied today by Mr. Bo Asplund, who has ably led the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) since the departure of Tom Koenigs last December, and, above all, by Ambassador Kai Eide, whom, as the President just noted, the Secretary-General has recently appointed as his new Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA. He will bring new dynamism to our efforts. In that regard, I would like to thank all the Member States that have expressed their strong support for him as he takes up his duties in Kabul.

The report (S/2008/159) of the Secretary-General, which was released last week, speaks for itself. It describes frankly the difficulties we have faced, especially in the past year. However, we have learned some important lessons by virtue of those difficulties, which we must now apply. In particular, we have an increasingly shared diagnosis of the main obstacles

before us. We face an insurgency that has proven to be more robust than we expected, as well as more ruthless than we ever imagined. Afghan governmental institutions remain fragile. Being without sufficient capacity, they are even more fragile due to the corrosive and destructive practices of corruption. A massive illegal drug economy is thriving in the context of the State's weak authority. It has also abetted the insurgency and undermined the State. The regional environment is complex and national interests are sometimes pursued at the expense of an effort to mutually support stability in Afghanistan in a coordinated manner. Finally, the international community, while certainly being committed and generous, has also too often been insufficiently united on crucial issues relating to the strategy in Afghanistan. The United Nations bears its own share of responsibility for the deficiencies in international coordination. We recognize that and, as I will explain during this briefing, we are working to correct it. However, we also need the cooperation of our international and Afghan partners.

In the light of that common diagnosis of the problems before us, the Security Council now has the important responsibility of renewing UNAMA's mandate. Despite important progress in Afghanistan — in particular in the areas of education and public health — and despite a fast-growing economy, we still face the serious problems I have just mentioned. Given the evolution of the situation during the past two years, now is the time to confront those challenges and to make the necessary changes and corrections in course. For that reason, the Secretary-General has included in his report a section on UNAMA's mandate that we hope will assist the Council in its decisions on the Mission's future.

(*spoke in English*)

UNAMA's current mandate is the product of negotiations with the Afghan Government and key partners that took place at the end of 2005. As indicated in the Secretary-General's report of 6 March, we feel that that mandate is still appropriate, and is sufficiently broad to fulfil our objectives. We have therefore not sought to change or expand UNAMA's mandate. We do not feel, in other words, that UNAMA needs additional powers. We do think, however, that, in the face of the evolved situation, the mandate needs to be sharpened. That is why the Secretary-General has proposed the six areas of focus set out in paragraph 64 of his report. I would like to draw the Council's attention to a few of those areas of focus. The first one is the coordination of international assistance.

The Secretary-General's recommendations on that essential question are the culmination of a discussion that began in September of last year at the high-level meeting on Afghanistan held at the margins of the General Assembly. We heard the very clear calls made by many participants for the United Nations to enhance its coordination efforts. We subsequently began consultations with Member States, the Afghan Government and within UNAMA on how best to achieve that. Those discussions were carried forward to the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting in Tokyo last month. Among the conclusions of the Tokyo meeting was that the Compact remains the expression of the international partnership with the Afghan Government, that the JCMB constitutes the primary coordination body to oversee that partnership, and that the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, when it is presented at the Paris conference in June, will be the blueprint to implement the goals of the Compact.

There are, therefore, two key issues to ensuring that all of that leads to improvements in the lives of all Afghans. The first is that the Afghanistan National Development Strategy must be given as much support as possible; the second is that the JCMB must be able to play an effective role. The Secretary-General's recommendations reflect those two priorities. Support for the Afghanistan National Development Strategy means that donors provide more of their funds through the Afghan core budget. Strengthening the JCMB means ensuring that it is at least aware of all the major assistance projects taking place in the country and can identify whether certain sectors or provinces are being under-served and be in a position to propose adjustments. The JCMB secretariat may need to be strengthened so as to organize and analyze such data.

The second issue is UNAMA's relationship with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). That relationship rests on two firm pillars: our common goals and our complementary but distinct mandates, both of which have their source in the Security Council. In the time since NATO assumed leadership of ISAF, we have created mechanisms for coordination and learned how to work with each other — at the provincial level, where Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and UNAMA offices interact; at the

Kabul level, between the UNAMA leadership and ISAF headquarters in Kabul; and at the headquarters level, in New York and Brussels. We look forward to the Bucharest meeting on Afghanistan to be held in early April, when NATO will present its own comprehensive approach. The Secretary-General will attend that meeting, demonstrating the high priority we ascribe to this relationship and to achieving success in Afghanistan.

The third issue that I wanted to highlight is the upcoming elections. The United Nations played a significant role in the 2004 and 2005 elections, where we not only provided technical advice but were also co-responsible for the elections through our presence in the Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB). We remain willing to provide support for the next cycle of elections, with the understanding that, unlike the previous cycle, the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission will be clearly in the lead. The registration of voters and the holding of elections will require significant financial support from the international community. We are working with the Electoral Commission to complete the plans so that we can submit them to donors. The obstacles should not be underestimated, nor should the stakes. We have learned from other peace operations that the second set of post-conflict elections is often more critical than the first. That will likely be the case for Afghanistan. We are reviewing our structures and resources to ensure that we can react immediately, once we receive a request for assistance and once Afghan authorities take the required decisions on the electoral date and on essential electoral legislation. I encourage the Afghan Government and legislative institutions to take those decisions without further delay.

The issue of political outreach remains central to our efforts. Mr. Asplund recently met with President Karzai and was reassured by the President that he fully supports UNAMA's efforts to reach out to the Afghan public, especially those Afghans who feel alienated from their Government and are not opposed to the Constitution and are not targets of United Nations sanctions under the process initiated by resolution 1267 (1999). In order to be more effective, we will strengthen our field presence by adding international staff to UNAMA's seven provincial offices created over the last 18 months, as approved in the last budget. We are also about to undertake an assessment, in close cooperation with the Department of Safety and Security, of UNAMA's field activities, with a view to possibly opening new field offices where security permits.

In order for our outreach activities to be credible, they must be backed up by improved governance, especially at the local level. We are supporting the recently established Independent Directorate for Local Governance, the main vehicle for improving subnational governance, strengthening the ties between the local and central governments. UNAMA also supported the design of the National Justice Programme, which is focused on increasing Afghan capacity to deliver legal services, ensure public access to courts and legal aid and improve public awareness of their rights and processes of legal redress.

This initiative addresses both the extension of the rule-of-law and local-level government, and I strongly urge Member States to ensure that it is adequately funded.

Finally, with regard to illegal narcotics, which I mentioned as a key factor undermining both Afghanistan's security and governance, I was pleased that the JCMB was able to agree upon an implementation plan for the counter-narcotics strategy. The discussions during the drafting of this plan led to the resolution of policy differences that had undermined our common anti-narcotic efforts. UNAMA and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime provided technical advice that helped this consensus to emerge. We expect, in the future, to continue providing this sort of technical advice and policy guidance to both the Afghan Government and its international partners. In particular, as we have often stated, we need to focus on security sector reform and especially on the development of the Afghan National Police. I remain hopeful that the reform initiatives, which have begun but have been slow to take effect, are being accelerated under the International Police Coordination Board, which was tasked at the JCMB Tokyo meeting with overseeing the implementation of those reforms.

In presenting the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/159), I have focused on only a few of the many issues it addresses. Looking at the future, we must be pragmatic, but we must also be ambitious. I am sure that soon enough Ambassador Eide will have his own observations on the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, as he is familiar with the country and

the United Nations system. We look forward to the keen judgments and suggestions he will undoubtedly make, and I, personally, am pleased to leave UNAMA in such capable hands.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I thank Mr. Guéhenno for his briefing. In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

Mr. Spatafora (Italy): I wish, first of all, to warmly thank Mr. Guéhenno for his clear and comprehensive briefing on the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2008/159). I also wish to acknowledge the participation and the presence in the Chamber of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Eide. We are pleased by the appointment of such a skilled and experienced diplomat to this challenging position. The higher the expectations — and they are very high — the stronger the support he will need when he embarks on this trip. I wish to assure Mr. Eide that he can count on us.

I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting in the broadest possible format. The long list of speakers before us bears witness to the keen interest of large sectors of the membership in this issue. It also shows how many friends Afghanistan can rely on in its quest for peace, stability and development. It is a privilege for us to have the opportunity to listen to our partners from all constituencies before embarking on the final stages of our work on the resolution to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

We feel humbled by the responsibility to steer this process in the Council, but also feel that we have a guiding star role here. I think that this guiding star idea has been captured by the Secretary-General in paragraph 64 of the report when he writes,

> "The guiding principle of UNAMA activities is to reinforce Afghan leadership and strengthen international cohesion in support of that leadership." (*S/2008/159, para. 64*)

It has to be clear for all of us that the strengthening of the leadership and the ownership of the Afghan Government is at stake. We will proceed by giving the utmost consideration to all the views that will be expressed during this debate. First of all, we have noted the Secretary-General's report and how Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno has said very clearly that the mandate is appropriate and sufficiently broad and that it has to be sharpened. I think that we must do exactly that, keeping in mind the six areas highlighted in the Secretary-General's report.

Italy fully aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of Slovenia on behalf of the European Union. I will only add a few complementary comments on the challenges that the Council is confronted with.

The main message that we can draw from the Secretary-General's report is that the international community needs to stay the course in Afghanistan, possibly with evolving modalities but certainly with unchanged determination. That is what our Afghan friends are asking for. The enemies of peace and stability have shown that they are ready to exploit any sign of weakness and fill all gaps that might be created. We pay tribute once again to the victims of all nationalities caused by the senseless violence that Afghanistan is enduring. Such a death toll can not be tolerated and must be stopped.

The mutual trust between Afghanistan and its partners is indispensable if we are to counter the opposition forces. The international community must trust the good faith of the Afghan authorities, and the Afghan authorities, on their part, must trust the genuine and unbiased commitment of its partners. Such background of trust must be maintained, even when it is felt by either side that mistakes are made. These misperceptions — because this is what it is all about; perceptions and misperceptions — cannot infringe on the commonality of our strategic goals; they can be corrected through dialogue and mutual understanding. The scary alternative would be the unravelling of our partnership and the success of our common enemies.

We remain convinced that the United Nations must continue to determinedly play its irreplaceable role as guarantor of our partnership and mutual trust. Our common commitment is nurtured by the legitimacy that only the United Nations can provide.

With this in mind, we cannot ask the United Nations to do more in terms of coordination, without a genuine commitment by every international actor to comply with the United Nations coordination role. It should also be clear that such an essential role must continue to go hand in hand with the continuous reinforcement, I repeat, of Afghan ownership and leadership in all sectors, ranging from security to the provision of services to the population. The Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board (JCMB) embodies, as the Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno has so appropriately emphasized, those guiding principles by its very nature and composition.

In our view, therefore, it should be further strengthened and enabled to fulfil its monitoring functions in accordance with the Afghanistan Compact. Such functions become all the more relevant as our common efforts to meet the benchmarks and timelines of the Compact face increasing challenges.

The report of the Secretary-General and today's briefing forcefully describe the nature of the challenges in the areas of security, governance, electoral preparation, socio-economic development, regional cooperation, human rights protection, gender equality, humanitarian assistance and counter-narcotics. The European Union Presidency will address in detail our shared concerns in these areas.

I will simply add that, against this background, it is certainly appropriate to organize a high-level, midterm review of the implementation of the Compact, in order to refocus and reprioritize our efforts. We are therefore ready to offer our contribution to the preparation of the international conference that France has so aptly and kindly offered to host.

Similar events are instrumental in giving a fresh impetus to initiatives on the ground, as proven by the effective follow-up to last year's Rome Conference on Justice and Rule of Law in Afghanistan. We have noted with particular satisfaction, in this regard, the good news contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the launch of the National Justice Programme.

Finally, I would like to address the fundamental question of the contribution to be provided by the Security Council. Sometimes the developments on the ground appear to frustrate the requests and expectations expressed around this table, but this does not mean that the Council should shy away from fulfilling its role as enshrined in the Charter. It is our responsibility to give focused and clear guidance to UNAMA for it is in this area we can indeed make a difference.

In this regard, we believe that the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, in paragraphs 63 and 64, offer a unique opportunity to provide such guidance. Given the wide-ranging nature of the mandate, we agree that there is a need to further build on the indications contained in resolution 1746 (2007) in order to identify a number of priority actions for the UNAMA, as we were saying before.

We are ready to work with Security Council members in order to translate into consensual language the well-advised recommendations of the Secretary-General, while carefully considering, at the same time, any additional suggestions. We are sure that the vision and the skills of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Eide, will be instrumental to effectively implement the refocused and prioritized mandate.

Let me also reiterate once again that UNAMA needs from the international community not only clear guidance, but also all the political support and the resources required to fulfil its challenging tasks.

We also believe that the resolution to be adopted should seriously address a number of horizontal issues included on the Council's agenda, namely, the protection of civilians, children in armed conflict and women, peace and security, all which are dramatically relevant in the case of Afghanistan. Our general discussions on these issues must be followed up when discussing country-specific mandates.

I will conclude by reiterating Italy's unwavering commitment to assist our Afghan friends, as long as requested, in their endeavour to enjoy peace, stability and development after decades of conflict. I believe that our continued contributions, contributions dating from 2001, along with the sacrifice of our troops, validate such commitment more eloquently than any words.

Mr. Arias (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, let me thank Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for the briefing he has provided us this morning. We would also like to express our gratitude for the efforts by Mr. Tom Koenigs, former Head of the United Nations

Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as well as his entire staff.

We are aware of the important role that UNAMA has played in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and that it why we would like to wish every success to Mr. Kai Eide in his new post as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the Mission.

Since the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan, the news that has reached us has not been very encouraging. This reflects the daunting challenge represented by the establishment of a viable and peaceful State in a country that, in recent decades, has only known war and intolerance.

However, we wonder if the growing obstacles that the international community is facing in Afghanistan are not the result of the lack of coordination and determination on the part of those who are in charge of assisting in its reconstruction. This could be making it difficult for them to tackle the roots of the conflict.

For example, we are disappointed to see that member States of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the organization in charge of security in Afghanistan, offer diverging strategies to stabilize the country. Decisions that prioritize swift results rather than long-term improvements, both in the institutional and security sectors, could be risky as they can undermine the attention and resources that are directed towards suppressing the insurgency.

Furthermore, unilaterally pushing for non-consensual policies does not help to generate coordinated strategies and also undermines the will of the people of Afghanistan to rebuild their country and to play an active role in this reconstruction. This lack of coordination and promotion of shared objectives represents a serious obstacle to multilateralism, which is the very foundation of our institution.

Lastly, we understand that, in order to bring more consistency to the efforts of the international community in Afghanistan, we need a more energetic leadership from UNAMA. The future of the country must, of course, be in the hands of the people of Afghanistan themselves, as was pointed out very clearly and accurately by the Ambassador of Italy, but UNAMA can and must assume a more proactive role in coordination efforts aimed at building and securing a viable State in Afghanistan.

Both the United Nations and the international forces must step up their efforts to improve cooperation mechanisms among themselves. They must also strengthen the able and responsible management of the Afghan leadership. For this reason, we support the extension of the UNAMA mandate until March 2009, with a greater and more energetic coordinating role for the United Nations in the efforts to rebuild the country and to improve its security situation.

Mr. Verbeke (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General Mr. Guéhenno for his briefing and presentation of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.

Let me, through you, Mr. President, welcome the presence of Mr. Kai Eide and congratulate him, on behalf of Belgium, on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and to pledge full support and confidence of my country as he fulfils this important role. Additionally, I am pleased to see at the Council table the presence of our colleague from Afghanistan.

In addition to the statement which will be made today by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union, to which my delegation fully subscribes, I would like to make the following comments on the central role of the United Nations in the comprehensive strategy in Afghanistan.

A little more than two years ago, Afghanistan and the international community concluded a five-year compact in London. The objectives defined at that time are still topical. Even though there still are challenges before us, on a positive note the international community remains strongly engaged in Afghanistan, as was emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report.

As in any partnership, each party, of course, bears its portion of responsibility.

The Government and the people of Afghanistan have a leading role to play; the international community, through its efforts, can only support and strengthen the elected regime. Within the framework of that partnership, the United Nations is prepared to respond to the recent appeals to assume a central role in coordinating international aid, and Belgium welcomes that. However, if it is to succeed, the Organization must be provided with the means and the space necessary to carry out that responsibility.

The cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community is even more essential in the light of the interconnected nature of the challenges facing Afghanistan. Succeeding in Afghanistan means improving the daily lives of Afghans and putting in place an institutional system that can maintain the progress made. Only a comprehensive approach and strategy will make that possible.

As we know, without security there can be no development, and without development security cannot be ensured. Unfortunately, the drug problem is an illustration of that. If we are to strengthen these two pillars of the Afghanistan Compact, namely, security and development, the third pillar — governance, the rule of law and human rights — will be just as crucial. Here, Afghans have a major responsibility. While progress has been made, particularly through the establishment of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, much still needs to be done. Corruption remains a major problem undermining judicial, police and administration reform efforts, and progress with respect to human rights remains limited.

In all those areas, the United Nations can make the difference. That is why Belgium supports the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2008/159), particularly with regard to the role of coordinating the international community's efforts, support for efforts to improve governance at the local level and strengthened cooperation with the International Security Assistance Force. In that regard, Belgium welcomes the participation of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the international meeting on Afghanistan to be held in Bucharest on 3 April on the sidelines of the NATO Summit.

2008 should be another important stage in the process begun in Bonn in 2001 to ensure that Afghanistan will once again become a stable and prosperous State. In addition to finalizing and launching the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, important decisions must be swiftly taken for the upcoming presidential and legislative elections.

The international conference that France has offered to host in Paris in June should be an opportunity to assess progress made and to encourage everyone — the Afghan Government and the international community — to redouble efforts between now and then to ensure that the objectives set in London will be attained.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his briefing on Afghanistan. China also wishes to congratulate Mr. Kai Eide on his appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. We look forward to working closely with him and with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

China has noted with satisfaction that, with the support of the international community and of the United Nations, Afghanistan has made some progress in the area of national reconstruction and development. On the political front, the Afghan Government has established the Independent Directorate for Local Governance to monitor local administration and to combat corruption and illegal drugs. In the economic arena, the Afghan national economy has experienced stable growth and a steady rise in projected gross national product for four consecutive years. With regard to regional cooperation, the Afghan Government has worked together with other countries in the region to combat terrorism and to promote economic development and the return of refugees.

However, we must deal with one fact: Afghans continue to face many severe challenges, such as a deteriorating security situation and constant acts of violence and terrorism. All levels of Government in Afghanistan need to be greatly strengthened, particularly the security and justice sectors. The Afghan people continue to live in poverty, and the drug issue remains unresolved. Meeting those challenges will require further efforts by the Afghan Government and the international community. China attaches great importance to the problems facing Afghanistan, and we look forward to further improvements in the situation there.

Here, I should like to emphasize the following points. First, the achievement of security and stability in Afghanistan will require joint efforts by the security forces in Afghanistan, UNAMA and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). China appreciates the efforts being made by UNAMA and ISAF in that regard. We hope that the parties concerned, while carrying out military actions against terrorists, will strengthen their communication and cooperation with the Afghan security sector and UNAMA, so that each party will bring its own advantages and working

synergies fully to bear. The international community must invest additional resources to help Afghanistan further rebuild its military and police forces so that they can assume, independently and at an early date, the responsibility of maintaining national security and social stability.

Secondly, the keys to lasting peace in Afghanistan are economic development and improvement in the quality of life. Experience has shown that military actions cannot fully resolve all the problems facing Afghanistan. The international community must provide additional support to the Afghan Government, and efforts must be made to fully implement the Afghanistan Compact and the National Development Strategy so that all people in Afghanistan can enjoy the benefits of development and regain their confidence in the country's future. China appreciates all the efforts made by the countries neighbouring Afghanistan to promote economic development.

Thirdly, in its efforts, UNAMA must continue to be guided by the principle of fairness and neutrality and must play a central coordinating role. China supports an extension of UNAMA's mandate and a greater role by UNAMA in coordinating international support for Afghanistan. Here, it should be pointed out that UNAMA, while working with the relevant international organizations, must abide strictly by its mandate and consistently maintain a position of fairness and neutrality. While coordinating the multifaceted international assistance to Afghanistan, UNAMA must remind donors of the need to respect the will of the Government and the people of Afghanistan. As for the issue of domestic reconciliation, UNAMA can provide constructive support at the request of the Afghan Government, but it cannot make decisions for the Government.

As a friendly country neighbouring Afghanistan, China has attached great importance to development in the country. We have great sympathy for the sufferings of the Afghan people. We sincerely hope that, with strong support from the international community, Afghans will be able to restore security and stability and achieve development and prosperity at an early date. China will, to the best of its ability, to continue to provide support to Afghanistan.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): Permit me to begin by drawing the Council's attention to the presence of a delegation of six British Members of Parliament from the House of Commons who are here on an official visit to the United Nations, at the side of the Chamber.

I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for his briefing, which, as always, was very full and informative. I also wish to thank Acting Special Representative Asplund for his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) since the beginning of the year and to pay a particularly warm welcome to Ambassador Kai Eide and to congratulate him on his appointment. We look forward to working very closely with him in the months ahead.

The United Nations is at the heart of the international effort in Afghanistan, and as head of UNAMA, Mr. Eide is going to play a crucial role in coordinating the overall international effort in Afghanistan. We welcome the Secretary-General's willingness to see UNAMA assume an even greater role in that coordination process. That is something we and others have been advocating for some time, and we recognize that those calling for greater coordination must themselves be willing to be coordinated.

I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for taking the initiative of convening today's debate. One of the remarkable things about Afghanistan is the number of countries and organizations involved in the international effort there. Another remarkable aspect is the degree of common thinking and common purpose among those countries and organizations. Events such as today's are an important reminder of the breadth of that international engagement and the extent of the common support for the Government of Afghanistan. I warmly welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan at today's debate.

We welcome the Secretary-General's latest report on and we recognize the picture it paints: a country that has made great strides since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, but that continues to face significant challenges — some of which are unique to Afghanistan, some of which are common to other post-conflict democracies. The international community has no choice but to continue to support Afghanistan in overcoming those challenges.

One of the tasks of the international community, led by the United Nations, is to bring together the various strands of activity — military, political,

development and economic — in a comprehensive approach in support of the Afghanistan Government. We are all aware that there is no purely military solution to Afghanistan's current challenges. Success depends upon marshalling all our resources in support of a common objective.

We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's call for closer civilian-military cooperation. The United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) share the same objectives in Afghanistan, and it is important they work together to deliver them. The NATO summit to be held in Bucharest next month is an opportunity to look at the totality of NATO contributions in Afghanistan and the way in which those efforts can best contribute to our overall objective. We welcome the announcement by the Secretary-General yesterday that he and President Karzai will both be present for a special meeting to discuss Afghanistan in Bucharest.

We also look forward to further expansion of the UNAMA presence in Afghanistan, including into the south. The greater the reach of UNAMA and the better its understanding of the dynamics in different parts of Afghanistan, the more it can deliver on its mandate and play the leadership role we all want to see.

Supporting a comprehensive approach also means supporting Afghan efforts to bring disaffected Afghans into society's mainstream, provided they renounce violence and accept Afghanistan's Constitution. We agree with the Secretary-General that UNAMA has an important role to play in supporting Afghan-led reconciliation activities in whatever ways the Government of Afghanistan considers appropriate.

The overall framework for our work in Afghanistan remains the Afghanistan Compact, signed in London in January 2006. That agreement constitutes the international community's commitment to Afghanistan. It also sets out what we, the international community, expect of the Government of Afghanistan. We should remember that this is an Afghan-led process, and that progress is measured by the ability of the Afghan Government to take the lead in key areas. I know that is also how the Afghan Government judges success and is what all their efforts are aimed at.

The process will take time. We are already seeing the Afghan National Security Forces increasingly take the lead in security operations, with international forces in support. It is clear that the next presidential and parliamentary elections should be Afghan-led and Afghan-administered, with the support, including financial, of the international community and the United Nations.

We also look forward to an increasingly proactive Afghan lead in counter-narcotics. The agreement reached in Tokyo on a prioritized implementation plan for the National Drug Control Strategy is an important step forward, with its aggressive eradication targets and commitment to provision of proper force protection. We also hope to see continued government efforts to improve local governance, which is so crucial to the counter-narcotics drive, including through the work of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance.

On the development side, we look forward to the finalization and launch of the Afghan National Development Strategy. That will be an important step in increasing Afghan ownership of the development effort, including the difficult process of identifying a realistic number of priority areas for that effort to focus on. The Paris conference to be held in June this year will be an important opportunity to review progress in implementing both the Development Strategy and the Compact more generally.

No one, and certainly not the United Kingdom, underestimates the challenges we face in Afghanistan. But we recognize what is at stake in Afghanistan, and that is why we have committed our military, financial and political support since 2001 and have stepped it up markedly over the past two years.

We are optimistic. We know that the people of Afghanistan and their Government want what people everywhere want: the chance to live peaceful, prosperous lives. That is a far more powerful vision than the violence and hatred offered by the enemies of democracy in Afghanistan. We are confident that, with our support, it is the vision of peace and prosperity that will win out.

Mr. Kafando (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): We thank Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno for having presented the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan. We would also like to welcome here Mr. Kai Eide, the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and we would like to encourage him in the new responsibilities that he has taken on.

The report highlights that despite the weakness of the political and socioeconomic institutions, which is clear, the trend is towards an improvement in the political process and the economic situation. With regard to the political aspect, the upcoming presidential elections that the Afghan authorities plan to organize will certainly be a decisive test in entrenching democracy in the country, as long as the executive and legislative powers manage to reach a consensus as quickly as possible on the draft electoral law, currently being reviewed in the national assembly, and on other practical modalities such as the census and the drawing up of voter lists. The regional environment should also help to contribute to the normalization of the political situation.

In the economic sphere, the diligent finalization of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy has become a priority in order to allow the Government to take on the fight against poverty and, more generally, the question of development. From that point of view, the generous offer made by the French authorities to host a conference in Paris for the support, launching and financing of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy should be welcomed.

All of those encouraging facts, which are to the credit of the Afghan authorities, would obviously be more productive if the security context were more conducive to that end. Unfortunately, there are serious obstacles preventing that progress. As the report points out, there has been, first of all, a rise in terrorist activities, in particular suicide attacks and the use of explosive devices against the civilian population, politicians, convoys and humanitarian workers. There is also the scourge of drugs, which constitutes the main source of funds for terrorist groups and is consequently linked to the rise in terrorist activities, and there is the scourge of organized corruption. The Security Council must therefore welcome and support the establishment of the National Drug Control Strategy.

We must add to the list of elements undermining the development and stability of Afghanistan the inability of the Afghan forces to respond effectively to these threats, due to a lack of troops and adequate resources. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Security Assistance Force must therefore provide effective support to the Afghan forces, particularly in terms of professional and operational supervision. That would help them to maintain a balance between law and order and the fight against the insurgency, especially since it is true that security and stability are crucial to establishing and guaranteeing the rule of law. In order to enable UNAMA to continue to play its decisive role, we favour the extension of its mandate.

The Government is still unable to administer justice. Summary executions and the stripping of fundamental freedoms remain common, and we must therefore strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Justice. We believe that the outcome of the July 2007 Rome Conference on the Rule of Law in Afghanistan will be of assistance in that regard.

These are all challenges that must be faced, and the international community must continue to provide cooperation and assistance to the Afghan authorities, in particular as regards implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, signed in London. Clearly, we reaffirm our full support for the recommendations that the Secretary-General has made with a view to achieving a permanent solution to the Afghan problem.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): I join others in thanking you, Mr. President, for convening this important open debate. At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for his introduction of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/159). I would like also to extend to Mr. Kai Eide our warmest congratulations on his appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

In his report, the Secretary-General says that two years after the adoption of the Afghanistan Compact the political transition continues to face serious challenges. We are deeply concerned over the current security situation in Afghanistan, where, as reported by the Secretary-General, in 2007 alone there were 8,000 conflict-related fatalities, of which 1,500 were civilians. We condemn all acts of violence aimed at destabilizing the country, in particular those targeting innocent civilians, including the terrorist attack that took place on 17 February near Kandahar, which killed over 100 people.

The difficulties and challenges that Afghanistan is facing today are not only those of a security nature. In reaffirming our support for the efforts of the Government and the people of Afghanistan aimed at stabilizing and rebuilding the country, and given the

specific situation in Afghanistan, which has gone through long decades of internal conflict and division, it is our view that besides measures to enhance security, the need to promote national reconciliation and a political process aimed at ensuring lasting Afghan and regional peace and stability should be duly recognized. Because of all the suffering they have endured and because of their earnest aspiration to move forward, the people of Afghanistan deserve the continued support and assistance of the international community in their cause of national rebuilding, the success of which depends on success against both major enemies: terrorism and drugs.

In that connection, we find it worrisome that Afghanistan remains one of the largest suppliers of cannabis in the world. While agreeing that there is an urgent need to strengthen enforcement activities aimed at eradicating and interdicting illicit drug trafficking and at dismantling production facilities, we believe that it is vital to address the pervasive poverty which is the root cause of this situation. Parallel to enforcement measures, in-depth action-oriented study is needed to come up with initiatives on building alternative livelihoods for the people so that they can enjoy a better life without engaging in drug-related activities.

While commending UNAMA for its work in Afghanistan and while supporting the Secretary-General's recommendation that the current mandate of UNAMA be extended for a further 12 months, we are of the opinion that, in the context of the complex security situation still prevailing in Afghanistan, UNAMA should focus on carrying out its present mandate, although I agree with Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno that the mandate should be sharpened. We support UNAMA in its willingness to play a role in supporting the electoral process by providing technical assistance and channelling international funds earmarked to support Afghan electoral institutions. However, this must be at the request of the Government of Afghanistan, in accordance with the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty of the country.

With the people of Afghanistan, we share a special bond of traditional friendship. We have always followed with keen interest and concern the situation in Afghanistan. Viet Nam has participated in the international conferences on the reconstruction of Afghanistan. With our limited resources, we have extended to the people of Afghanistan our modest assistance. With our post-war reconstruction experience, we are ready to join Afghanistan's reconstruction efforts, bilaterally and in tripartite frameworks with the participation of donor countries and the Afghan Government.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica would have preferred to speak after hearing the statement of the representative of Afghanistan; in our view, hearing from the country that is the subject of this morning's debate would have been most valuable. For that reason, our statement will not include comments on or reactions to his statement, as we would have wished.

I thank Mr. Guéhenno for his briefing this morning and welcome the recent appointment of Mr. Kai Eide as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Our thanks go to Mr. Tom Koenigs for his endeavours during his two years in that post.

I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. The deterioration in the security situation and in the fight against the drug industry, as well as the perhaps insufficient progress in the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, call for this new consideration of what action is needed and of the international community's commitment to support that action.

For more than six years the United Nations has been striving to ensure that Afghanistan would discard the perverse logic of war, build representative and inclusive political institutions and firmly embark on the path of economic growth and social development. But we see clear disturbing signs that the road ahead is strewn with obstacles. First of all, the most recent of the rather frequent unrest and disturbances reveal problems regarding the building of legitimate democratic institutions. To that, we must add a climate of growing insecurity, as seen in the more than 180 terrorist attacks that took place in 2007 and in the nearly 30 that have occurred so far this year. This situation clearly undermines efforts to succeed in the physical and social reconstruction of the country. I cannot fail to mention the cultivation, production and trafficking of opium, which compromise the security, development and governance of Afghanistan.

Only a sustained international effort can prevent difficult days ahead for Afghanistan, and that will not

be easy. Compliance with the objectives of the Afghanistan Compact is the primary responsibility of the Afghan Government, but also requires the unconditional support of the international community. We therefore agree with the Secretary-General when he writes in his report that

> "To meet the security challenge and stabilize Afghanistan, a common approach is needed that integrates security, governance, rule of law, human rights and social and economic development." (*S/2008/159, para. 66*)

That is why Costa Rica attaches particular importance to the role to be played by UNAMA in assisting the Afghan Government with respect to security sector reform. The construction of the State depends largely on the strength of the institutions involved in that sector. We further understand that the strengthening of the Government will depend largely on the trust it is able to inspire in its citizens. We therefore welcome the measures being taken to address corruption. We stress the need to invest further in activities linked to development, in particular at the local level. Only thus can we strengthen the system to meet the noble objectives enshrined in the Afghanistan Compact.

I wish to conclude by referring to the third component of the Compact — governance, and in particular human rights. The reports submitted to the international community of persons being condemned to death for exercising their right to free expression, as well as of torture and arbitrary detention, are a source of deep concern to us. For Costa Rica, the fundamental role that a human-rights based approach plays in the promotion of stability and development is clear. No sustainable security, responsible governance or full development can be built on the bases of abuse and intolerance.

We understand that UNAMA's mandate is sufficiently comprehensive and suited to help the Government of Afghanistan to meet its obligations in that area, and we expect the Government to make an effective commitment to promoting action in that respect.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I, too, wish to thank Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his most informative briefing this morning. I also wish to thank the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for its efforts, in particular in rebuilding the country.

We also welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General Eide, whom we congratulate on his appointment as Head of UNAMA.

I further welcome the Ambassador of Afghanistan.

Unfortunately, the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/159) paints a bleak picture of the situation in Afghanistan. The principal causes it cites in that respect are renewed insurgent activities, the fragility of State institutions and their incapacity to promote socio-economic development to meet the basic needs of the people of Afghanistan.

The report also stresses the link between security and reconstruction. It notes in paragraph 31 that "[c]ultivation remains concentrated ... in the insurgency-affected provinces", which leads us simply to reiterate that the situation requires a comprehensive solution, and not an exclusively military one. I believe that we are all mindful of that.

The international community's fundamental goal in Afghanistan is to help the Afghan people to establish a stable democratic State, and not to wage war against the Taliban or other armed groups. The fight against those entities is not an objective, and the use of force alone can never ensure the State's control over its territory or assist it in reaching its development goals. Moreover, stability requires a parallel effort of dialogue to reconcile the country with all actors of Afghan society. The Afghanistan legislature has called on President Karzai to consider reconciliation with the anti-Government rebels and to strengthen the army and the police, in parallel with the adoption of measures for development.

Security is a precondition for development, but maintaining peace also requires socio-economic conditions that will meet the minimum basic needs of the people of Afghanistan. The solution lies in fighting not only the insurgents, but also the climate that fosters fundamentalism and extremism. In other words, we must build schools, provide medical care, and strengthen infrastructure. The Secretary-General stresses that connection when he writes in his report that

> "[p]rovinces not affected by anti-Government violence have demonstrated an increasing

capacity for delivering governance and economic development" (*ibid., para. 11*).

The report also notes in paragraph 29 that "counter-narcotics efforts have gained significant momentum", although in paragraph 31 it says that "opium-poppy cultivation is not expected to change significantly" in 2008 and that it is "likely to increase ... in the insurgency-affected provinces". While we appreciate those counter-narcotics efforts, we would emphasize once again that their success will be ensured only with the improved capacity to provide decent and legitimate employment to all Afghans.

I shall be brief. We appreciate the progress made in the dismantling of illegal armed groups and in the Government's efforts to ensure good governance at the national level through the establishment of the Independent Directorate for Local Governance, as well as the measures taken to combat endemic corruption in the country. We especially welcome the Government's efforts to develop the National Development Strategy and to make progress in that regard, as mentioned in paragraph 53 of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/159). My country supports the observations of the Secretary-General as regards the importance of the Strategy. Development is a vital part of the Mission's work and is crucial to ensuring the success of the efforts currently being made in Afghanistan.

Finally, my country also supports the Secretary-General's recommendation to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and to strengthen its role in the coordination of international efforts to ensure that the necessary funds are secured for the Mission to open regional offices and carry out good-governance efforts.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): We join others in congratulating Mr. Kai Eide of Norway on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We are confident that under his leadership the United Nations will continue to intensify its leading role in coordinating the efforts of the international community in support of the Government of Afghanistan.

We also wish to thank Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for presenting the latest report (S/2008/159) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has made some strides in the past few years, but it continues to face serious challenges. The Secretary-General's report describes the current state of affairs in the country in all its complexity. The serious challenges facing Afghanistan, which are detailed in the latest report of the Secretary-General, should not be underestimated. Among other things, those challenges include the high level of insurgent and terrorist activities, the alarming increase in the cultivation and production of opium, the widespread problem of corruption and the slow pace of social and economic development.

We believe that the process that began with the Bonn Agreement, and which is continuing under the Afghanistan Compact, is largely on track and should further be improved. In that regard, South Africa is pleased that the Secretary-General acknowledges in his report the continuing engagement of the international community in Afghanistan. For our part, we support a common approach that will integrate security, governance, the rule of law, human rights and social and economic development in the country. We also call for full respect for human rights in Afghanistan.

The persistent threat to security posed by insurgent and terrorist activities is the main challenge to Afghanistan's nation-building efforts and stability. Paragraph 19 of the Secretary-General's report clearly illustrates the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, especially in recent months. In that context, we deplore any attempts to destabilize the country, in particular terrorist attacks on innocent civilians and children.

The report of the Secretary-General once again mentions the challenges associated with the narcotics issue in Afghanistan. While the country continues to face the problem of narcotics, we are pleased that counter-narcotics efforts have gained significant momentum since the last report. We applaud the Government of Afghanistan, supported by its international partners — in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, for reaching agreement on priority actions to be taken on counter-narcotics efforts. We encourage them to fully implement the National Drug Control Strategy and to strengthen enforcement activities. We further encourage the Government of Afghanistan to improve its institutional capacity for service delivery and development in support of viable alternatives to poppy cultivation.

South Africa reaffirms its support for the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, under the ownership of the Afghan people. We also commend the central role played by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in facilitating and monitoring the implementation of the Afghan Compact.

We would like to stress the importance of regional cooperation as an effective means to promote security, governance and development in Afghanistan. In that context, my delegation welcomes the improved relations between Afghanistan and its neighbours, in particular Pakistan. We commend the resolve both countries have expressed to combat extremism and terrorism by further improving existing mechanisms for the exchange of information.

In conclusion, South Africa supports the central and impartial role of UNAMA and its activities in leading the efforts of the international community. We support the need to strengthen UNAMA's coordination capacity to enable the Mission to make a significant difference on the ground. We call upon UNAMA to support the Government of Afghanistan in its preparations for the upcoming elections, to be held next year.

We commend the Italian delegation on its good work as a lead nation on the issue of Afghanistan, and for preparing the draft resolution on the mandate of UNAMA. For our part, we will constructively work with our partners during the discussions on UNAMA's mandate renewal.

Mr. Khalilzad (United States of America): I want to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate. I should also like to thank Mr. Guéhenno for his briefing.

On behalf of my Government, I wish to thank the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) — in particular former Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tom Koenigs and Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bo Asplund — for their dedication to the cause of Afghanistan's success. We also thank them for the timely and sound input they provided to the Secretary-General in producing a frank and comprehensive report (S/2008/159). My Government concurs with the central judgement of that report, which presents a balanced account of both the progress that has been achieved and the challenges confronting Afghanistan.

The success of Afghanistan is a vital interest of the international community. Success in Afghanistan will contribute not only to the improvement of the lives of 30 million people, who have suffered terribly as the result of 25 years of occupation and war; it will also be a keystone in the effort to defeat terrorism, to weaken extremism, to create regional stability in Central and South Asia, to advance the needed political and economic transformation of the broader Middle East and to reduce the threat of narcotics from Afghanistan.

As we look ahead, Afghan leaders, regional Powers and the international community all have important responsibilities if Afghanistan is to fully succeed. However, I would like to focus on the actions needed on the part of the United Nations.

The United Nations should be proud of the role it has played in Afghanistan, starting with the Bonn process. The United States welcomes the appointment of Mr. Kai Eide as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We thank him for taking that important and challenging job. He can count on our support, and we promise to work closely with him. His appointment opens a new chapter in United Nations engagement in Afghanistan. His role will be vital in advancing the kind of productive partnership with President Karzai and the Afghan Government that is the foundation for all, meaningful progress. Afghans have governed their country for millenia. Our task is not to do this work for them, but to enable their country to stand on its own feet as soon as possible.

As we discuss the renewal of the UNAMA mandate, the focus should be on setting the right priorities. At the top of the agenda is empowering Special Representative Eide to coordinate and integrate more effectively the support of the international community, which is composed of dozens of donors, agencies and implementers. One of the greatest assets for Afghanistan is the sheer number of countries involved, on both the military and the civilian sides. The inevitable resulting challenge is ensuring that sufficient coordination exists to get the most out of the individual efforts.

First, Special Representative Eide will need to ensure that civilian assistance is integrated in support of the Afghan people and Government and of efforts to stabilize the country. While the question of integrating

NATO-International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) military efforts will be dealt with during the upcoming summit in Bucharest, success against the insurgency requires a comprehensive campaign plan that ensures that military action to clear areas of the enemy is coordinated with civilian efforts to establish good governance and economic development.

Secondly, Special Representative Eide should better coordinate the efforts of the international community to ensure a shared and focused commitment to the Afghan National Development Strategy and the Afghanistan Compact. The execution of the elements of the Compact has been uneven, and Special Representative Eide should catalyse improved results where needed. This will entail greater coordination both among donors and between the Afghan Government and donors. This is particularly needed to increase the capacity of Afghan ministries to provide basic services and to tackle the problem of corruption.

Thirdly, Special Representative Eide should work to bolster international support for Afghanistan. Among the leaders — as well as the publics — of key donor countries there is an inadequate understanding of the achievements and challenges of Afghanistan. The upcoming Paris conference of donors will be an important opportunity to rally such support. Explaining all aspects of the current situation, Special Representative Eide can enable friends of Afghanistan to appreciate the return on the investment to date and to focus future commitment on the most important challenges and opportunities.

Fourthly, Special Representative Eide should use his good offices to promote reconciliation and accountability, in close coordination with the Afghan Government, based on the acceptance of the Afghan constitution. In addition, Special Representative Eide should engage in active diplomacy to create a regional environment conducive to the stabilization of Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2001, regional Powers came together, despite their differences, to support the Bonn process, which enabled Afghans to freely choose their own Government. Reclaiming the spirit of Bonn is in the interest of all these countries. It should be a key priority for the United Nations effort.

To carry out this mission, UNAMA must have the right people in Afghanistan, as well as sufficiently robust funding and security assets. We regret that, as noted in the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/159), UNAMA faces vacancy rate and staff retention issues. The United Nations must incentivize its best people to create an effective presence, particularly in parts of the country where NATO-ISAF is achieving stability but needs a partner to help to improve governance and development. It is not just a matter of filling the slots, but rather one of getting highly motivated and capable people with the right skills.

The United States is also ready to do its part to help Afghanistan succeed. In addition to the 27,500 troops already deployed to support Afghanistan, the United States will send an additional 3,200 marines, 2,200 of them dedicated to the strengthening of security in the south and 1,000 to training Afghan national security forces. In 2008, the United States will provide over $2.9 billion in total assistance, including $1 billion for education, health, agriculture, infrastructure and local reconstruction. In addition, we have asked Congress for $2.6 billion in a 2008 supplemental funding request. We are also undertaking a number of new initiatives, including the establishment of a public-private partnership with American law firms and schools to help advance the rule of law and establish a strong core of legal professionals.

The Council should fully support UNAMA and its team as they pursue all these avenues. We look forward in the coming days to working with the Government of Afghanistan, the Security Council and other key countries to ensure that UNAMA can better address Afghanistan's current needs and priorities.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): I wish to begin by expressing our appreciation to Mr. Guéhenno, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for presenting the latest report of the Secretary-General on developments in Afghanistan (S/2008/159).

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Kai Eide on his appointment as the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. My delegation also commends Mr. Tom Koenigs, who completed his assignment in December 2007, for his hard work and his contribution to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

In the past few years, Afghanistan has made notable achievements in various sectors. Representative political institutions have steadily been taking root, and economic

development has been progressing. Yet, my delegation is concerned over the increasing activities of the insurgency, which are affecting those achievements in a harmful way. Most perturbing are the increase of concerted insurgency in the south and east of Afghanistan and attacks against local and humanitarian workers. Those violent attacks risk undermining the current efforts by the Afghan Government to achieve peace and stability in the country. The attacks have also prevented access by the Government and aid organizations to some districts.

Indonesia welcomes the commitment of the Afghan Government to address the security challenges as a priority. We recognize the increasing need for capacity-building efforts for the Afghan National Army. We acknowledge the importance of the measures taken by the Afghan National Army, in collaboration with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), in responding to insurgency activities. My delegation also attaches great importance to respect for the principles of international law, including international human rights and humanitarian law, as well as the safety and security of civilians when security matters are addressed through military measures.

Indonesia also believes that a military approach alone cannot fully address the root causes of the current security challenges in Afghanistan. We therefore underline the importance of political dialogue and reconciliation involving all factions in Afghanistan, within the framework of the Afghan constitution. Like the Secretary-General, we too see the merit of a common approach to meet the security challenges and to stabilize Afghanistan, an approach which integrates security, governance, rule of law, human rights and social and economic development.

Addressing the drug economy is also an urgent matter, as it is particularly linked to sustaining the insurgency. In this regard, we welcome the fact that the counter-narcotics regime has gained momentum and that the prioritized implementation plan for the Government's National Drug Control Strategy has been endorsed.

In the political area, we are aware of continued efforts to harmonize views between the legislative and executive branches of the Afghan Government. More specifically, the 2009 and 2010 presidential and parliamentary elections will open a new chapter in Afghanistan's democratic transition. We welcome, in that regard, the Government's approval in November 2007 of a draft electoral law, which is being reviewed by the National Assembly. We also attach particular importance to the participation of all Afghan political stakeholders in providing views on such critical issues as the electoral system.

Regional cooperation continues to be pertinent to the strengthening of Afghanistan's engagement in regional dynamics and of its capacity to address transnational challenges. Indonesia, therefore, welcomes the hosting by the Afghan Government of the seventeenth meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organization in Herat. The Kabul Declaration on Promoting Regional Electricity Cooperation between Central and South Asia is a landmark achievement in Afghanistan's regional diplomacy. We also welcome bilateral partnerships between Afghanistan and neighbouring States in finding mutually acceptable solutions to, among other issues, the challenge of Afghan refugees.

We believe that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) remains critical to Afghanistan. UNAMA's support in achieving the country's national goals will continue to be needed. As the political elements of the Bonn process have been formally completed, UNAMA's role will continue to be important in assisting Afghanistan to execute various activities on other pillars of the Bonn Agreement.

In this regard, we concur with the assessment of the Secretary-General on the importance of enhanced coordination, political outreach, support for subnational governance, humanitarian coordination, electoral assistance and strengthened cooperation with ISAF as points of emphasis for UNAMA's programme of work in the months ahead.

Considering the continued importance of UNAMA in supporting the Afghanistan Government in achieving its national goals and the daunting challenges it continues to face, Indonesia supports the Secretary-General's proposal for the extension of the mandate of UNAMA for a further 12 months.

Finally, our appreciation goes to Mr. Bo Asplund, who served as Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and to all UNAMA personnel for their dedication and tireless efforts in the discharge of their important responsibilities.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): The Permanent Representative of Slovenia will soon deliver a statement on behalf of the European Union, with which France fully associates itself. I would now like to make a few comments in my national capacity.

First of all, like previous speakers, I would like to thank Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno for his briefing and to welcome the presence of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, Mr. Kai Eide, to whom we address our warmest congratulations on his appointment. Like his predecessors, Mr. Kai Eide can rely on the full and active support of France in the vital mission that he must carry out on the ground. We note with satisfaction that his appointment enjoys broad international consensus and that the Afghan authorities have expressed their wish to work closely with him. He thus has all the authority he needs to carry out his essential role of coordination.

Six years after the fall of the regime which made Afghanistan a haven for international terrorism, we find ourselves at a crucial moment. The military situation has been stabilized, but it remains difficult. It is not yet led to decisive weakening of an adversary that does not hesitate to use terror, as we were tragically reminded by this morning's attack on the Canadian contingent in Kandahar.

The development of drug trafficking, which is closely related to the development of insurrection, is a particularly disturbing phenomenon. Its eradication through determined and sustained action must remain a priority for the Afghan authorities as well as for the international community. First and foremost the Afghan State authorities has yet to establish the rule of law in many regions of the country and to ensure that it is respected, and the problem of governance remains critical, in particular at the local level; this weakens the undeniable progress that has been achieved since 2001. The years to come will be decisive in this respect, especially with regard to the elections planned for 2009 and 2010. These are steps that the international community must help the Afghans successfully take.

In our view, we must address four key challenges in order to move forward in restoring Afghanistan and in fulfilling the objectives defined in London in 2006.

First of all, the international community must confirm its long-term commitment in order to persuade the Afghans that nothing will undermine our determination to bring an end to attacks by those — terrorists, drug-traffickers and illegal armed groups — who hope to see our withdrawal. The peace and security both of Afghanistan and of the entire world depends on this. To be effective, this mobilization of the international community, which has already led to commitment of considerable resources and to substantial results, requires greater coordination among all the players. As has already been stated, Mr. Kai Eide's endeavours should make a major contribution to this.

The civilian and military commitment should be part of a greater context — and this too has been said by previous speakers — to enable the Afghans to decide their own future and to live in peace in their country. The gradual transfer of responsibilities to the Afghans must be our ongoing objective. This is especially important in the security sphere; beginning with Kabul, training efforts must be strengthened to that end.

Finally, we must consolidate the comprehensive strategy drawn up at the London Conference in January 2006. In that spirit, France, at the request of President Karzai, will organize in June 2008 a conference in support of Afghanistan. It will aim to publicize the achievements of six years of joint efforts, to reaffirm the international commitment and to establish a road map for the years to come. It will, in particular, take stock of the London Compact and will enable us to refocus the London strategy around realistic priority objectives. Of course we want to closely associate the United Nations with the conference, in particular the Secretary-General and his Special Representative.

Afghanistan is a priority for France and for the European Union. The President of the French Republic reaffirmed our long-term commitment during his visit to Afghanistan last December, both as regards civilian reconstruction assistance and as regards security, through our participation in the International Security Assistance Force and our support for the training of the Afghan police and army.

We see this bilateral and European commitment as part of a close partnership at all levels with the United Nations. Only the United Nations has the legitimacy, the impartiality and the expertise which are necessary for the development of a comprehensive approach to consolidating the democratic process in support of action by the Afghan authorities.

It is in that spirit that we support the extension of the mandate of UNAMA, along the lines set out by the Secretary-General in his report, including strengthened authority for the Special Representative, a sharpened mandate focused on a few priorities for action, and a strengthened presence on the ground in close coordination with other actors. UNAMA will thus be in a position to more effectively carry out its main role of restoring Afghanistan in order to bring to its population the freedom, security and prosperity which, like every other people in the world, it deserves.

Mr. Jurica (Croatia): We thank the Secretary-General for his thorough and comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2008/159), and we welcome the observations and conclusions contained therein. We would also like to thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno for his briefing.

We have noted with satisfaction the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Kai Eide of Norway as his Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We are confident that, with his excellent background on security issues and his much-needed experience and diplomatic skills, Mr. Eide will successfully accomplish the mission entrusted to him.

In recent years, since the fall of the Taliban, the Government of Afghanistan and the international community have together taken some significant steps in improving the political, social and economic plight of Afghans. Conversely, and despite significant increases in the number of foreign troops and in the amount of aid provided to Afghanistan, violence, insecurity and opium production have risen dramatically. The international community must stand united in support of the Government and the people of Afghanistan and must, together with them, confront the challenges and threats facing the country. Genuine security remains the fundamental prerequisite for achieving stability and development in Afghanistan.

As far as security is concerned, the main role undoubtedly belongs to the military and the police. In our view, the capacity of the Afghan national security forces to guarantee security in their own country is of the utmost importance in that regard. Therefore, enhancing that capacity should be our first and most urgent task.

At the same time, it is important to underline that security cannot be provided by military means alone. The military clearly has its place in such efforts, but, at the same time, we must be aware of its limits. We would like to see more civilian experts engaged on the ground. Good governance and the rule of law, as well as economic reconstruction and social development, all play important roles in the efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. We must support the efforts of the Afghan Government to deliver services to its citizens. In our view, that is a truly decisive element that will, over time, build the people's confidence in the Government.

Of particular importance in that connection are the strong support provided by the international community to the Afghan Government and mutual respect for the principles of aid effectiveness as expressed in the vision set out in the Afghanistan Compact. That important agreement should be thoroughly implemented and should become the main promoter of the Government's policies at the provincial and local levels. Croatia welcomes the announcement of preparations for an international conference to be held in Paris to review progress in the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, as well as to discuss the way ahead.

Afghan ownership is crucial for the ultimate success of all peace efforts. We expect that there will be great interest in the finalization of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy as a result of the open public policy dialogue undertaken in Afghanistan on the most important security, economic and development issues. We are also confident that coordinated and effective implementation of the National Development Strategy will lead to substantive improvements in the daily lives of most Afghans.

The rule of law and improving the current state of affairs in the judicial sector are also of great importance, and we support all activities pursuant to the outcomes of the 2007 Rome Conference. However, owing to the fact that the majority of cases still go through traditional dispute settlement mechanisms, Croatia believes that serious consideration should be given to looking at ways to include human rights principles in those mechanisms as well. We believe that attention should be paid to the findings of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, because it is precisely the concept of human rights that should be the foundation for a stable and functioning political system. In that context, particular attention should be accorded to improving the status of women and children and improving respect for their rights.

Croatia agrees with the view of the Secretary-General that civilian-military cooperation is truly indispensable if we are to overcome the existing challenges. To that end, my Government would like to stress the importance of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. As a practical form of civilian-military partnership, these relatively small teams deployed in Afghan provinces should be considered an innovative form of crisis management unit designed to achieve synergy in the joint activities of the two components. That is why we believe that they should be fully supported in their activities and that this concept should be further developed on the basis of the lessons learned since its establishment. In that regard, UNAMA could assume a greater coordinating role in relation to international assistance programmes.

We believe that the promotion of Afghan-led reconciliation programmes, under the vigilant control of the Afghan Government, is a particularly important factor in the attempts to pacify the security situation in the country. It bears repeating that a dialogue to that end should take place exclusively within the framework of the Afghan Constitution and with full respect for the sanctions regime established by the Security Council, particularly through its resolution 1267 (1999). National reconciliation would facilitate the cooperation of various groups throughout the country with the central Government and would, we hope, lead to the pacification of the country and to regional stabilization.

As expressly stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2008/159), the drug-related economy represents a fundamental threat to political, economic and social institutions in Afghanistan. There are clear and growing links between the drug-related economy and the insurgency, which has been financed largely from that source. Moreover, the drug-related economy in Afghanistan is a serious regional and international problem, since Afghanistan is the largest producer of opium in the world.

Accordingly, we place high hopes in effective implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy, particularly at the local level, in order to achieve a sustained and significant reduction in the production and trafficking of narcotics, leading to their complete elimination. Afghan farmers should be strongly encouraged to eradicate poppy production and should be given assistance so that they can pursue alternative livelihoods.

Croatia also believes that regional and international cooperation is essential in the fight against the illicit trafficking of drugs, including through border management cooperation in the area of drug control and through contributions to the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund. It is clear that a certain number of high officials benefit from this trade and that the drug-related economy generates widespread corruption. Bearing that in mind, we urge the Afghan Government to implement the national anti-corruption strategy and to curb this silent destroyer.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of the Russian Federation.

We thank Mr. Guéhenno for his comprehensive briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and for presenting the recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/159).

I shall be direct: we are seriously concerned at the constant increase in terrorist activity on the part of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremists. Their activities undermine the fragile foundations of Afghan statehood and hinder comprehensive implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. We are particularly alarmed that terrorists are, in effect, controlling an entire group of regions on whose territories parallel governments have been established. Now, more than ever before, it is important that, through joint efforts, the Afghan security forces and the international military presences reverse the negative security situation, which is hampering the consolidation of peace and democratic development in Afghanistan.

The dynamic of the military and political situation confirms the conclusion, expressed by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his report, that the national reconciliation process must be carried out with full respect for the anti-Taliban sanctions regime established by the Security Council through its resolution 1267 (1999). One thing is clear: a return to civilian life is possible only for those who are innocent of war crimes. Any attempt to cosy up to extremists and to gradually invest them with power can only risk further destabilization. That is the principle that should guide the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) as it carries out its mandate.

Unless we cut off the financial sources of terrorist subversion — the major source of which remains drug trafficking — we will not be able to cool its intensity.

We support the view of the Secretary-General that, in the interest of effectively combating the Afghan drug threat, it is essential to focus efforts on destroying not only drug crops, but also underground laboratories, and to take more vigorous action to intercept drugs in transit. Moreover, the ongoing inability of the Afghan Government, despite the assistance of the international community, to curb the drug threat is obvious proof of the relevance of the Russian Federation's initiative on establishing, with the United Nations in a coordinating role and with the participation of neighbouring States, a comprehensive system of counter-narcotic and financial security belts.

At the same time, we need to make fuller use of the opportunities offered by regional associations, which have proven their effectiveness in this area of work, in particular the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Strengthening counter-narcotic and counter-terrorist protection around the Afghan State will not only significantly weaken the financial resources of extremists, it will also help achieve a prompt stabilization of both Afghanistan and the region as a whole. Achieving that goal would also be aided by comprehensively building regional and integration processes.

We share the view of the Secretary-General regarding the vital need to preserve the central role of the United Nations in coordinating international efforts for post-conflict settlement and for the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan. We also fully agree on the adequacy of the current mandate of UNAMA, as confirmed by the report, for an effective resolution of the tasks set forth in the London Compact. We support the proposal of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of UNAMA for another 12-month period.

We welcome the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of Mission, Mr. Kai Eide, and we wish him success in his upcoming activities under the mandate to be extended next week by the Council.

The Russian Federation actively participates in implementing projects of vitally important significance for Afghanistan in the areas of energy, transport and mineral processing. A serious contribution to the economic renewal of the country has been made by the agreement to settle Afghan debt to the Russian Federation. On 31 January 2008, in connection with the request by the Government of Afghanistan, we conducted an operation to provide humanitarian assistance to Afghans suffering from lack of food owing to the harsh winter. A delegation from the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations gave more than 3,000 tons of wheat flour to representatives of the Afghan authorities. The Russian Federation will continue to undertake efforts aimed at stabilizing Afghanistan and resolving the large-scale challenges before it.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Allow me to begin by congratulating you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of March and expressing our appreciation for the convening of this important meeting on the situation in Afghanistan. On behalf of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I congratulate Mr. Kai Eide on his recent appointment and wish him every success in fulfilling the task entrusted to him. We look forward to working closely with him and promise to do so. We are thankful to Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno for his briefing today and to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in Afghanistan.

Increased terrorist attacks by the enemies of Afghanistan have led to some ill-judged and misguided perceptions of the situation in the Afghanistan. Recent remarks regarding government control or even its failure in Afghanistan are the result of premature assumptions, which have the potential to undermine public support for efforts to achieve lasting peace and security in the country. We should stay the course with firm determination and prevent security nuances from weakening our resolve to achieve our shared goals.

Let us not forget that we, Afghanistan and our international partners, have made undeniable gains towards a strong, stable and democratic Afghanistan. By all standards, the achievements made thus far reflect remarkable progress. Today, a greater part of Afghanistan is secure from terrorism and violence. The fight against terrorists and extremists continues. Thanks to the support of our international partners, our security forces have become stronger and more effective. The Afghan National Army has reached 58,000 troops and has assumed a greater role in the fight against terrorists seeking to destabilize Afghanistan and the region.

With the support of our international partners, we have dismantled more than 120 terrorist bases of operation and apprehended 1,000 terrorists, including foreigners. Among the captured are elite commanders of the Taliban, Al-Qaida rank and file and those responsible for recent terrorist attacks.

In spite of our achievements, significant challenges remain. Providing security for our people is not only our main objective, but also our primary challenge. Terrorists have increased their attacks against civilians, schools, religious figures, security forces and international partners. They have also broadened the scope of their activities in the region. New violent fronts have been opened. Those attacks, which have been carried out by means of hit and run tactics, should not be seen as a sign of the enemy's strength, but rather of their frustration resulting from their inability to engage in direct battles.

The Government of Afghanistan will spare no effort to improve the security of its people. In that regard, we continue to maintain a comprehensive strategy that has both military and political dimensions. While the military campaign remains the centrepiece of our efforts to defeat terrorists and consolidate security, we are according greater attention to political outreach and furthering the national reconciliation process. We reiterate our call to individuals with past grievances to reject violence, abide by the Constitution and join their fellow compatriots in rebuilding their country. In that connection, we welcome the readiness of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to extend its good offices to support our reconciliation efforts.

The interconnected challenges facing Afghanistan require mutually reinforcing efforts to consolidate gains in the areas of security, governance, rule of law, human rights, development and counter-narcotics. Strengthening governance and combating corruption and narcotics remain among our top priorities. We have initiated new measures to improve governance at the provincial and local levels. As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General, the Independent Directorate for Local Governance has strengthened the links between the provincial administrations and the central Government. It has also led to progress in a variety of areas at the provincial and district levels, including the sustainable delivery of basic services to local communities, disbandment of illegal armed groups, police reform and counter-narcotics.

The Government of Afghanistan has taken numerous measures to combat corruption. Those include the creation of an inter-institutional commission, headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, to address corruption in the public sector; the development of a draft national anti-corruption strategy; and the signing of the United Nations Convention against Corruption in August 2007. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the challenges of fighting corruption and strengthening the rule of law requires time and resources. We welcome the new emphasis of UNAMA in support of our efforts to strengthen governance and the rule of law.

As the report of the Secretary-General asserts, our counter-narcotics efforts have gained momentum. Following the increase in cultivation and production of opium in 2007, we have taken a series of additional measures to expedite the implementation of our National Drug Control Strategy. In the recent meeting of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board in Tokyo, we reached a consensus with our international partners on areas in which immediate action should be taken.

We have prioritized counter-narcotics as a key pillar of our policy advisory group, which aims to improve security in the six provinces with the highest levels of violence. In October of last year we designated 50,000 hectares as the national eradication target for 2008. In addition, to address the mutually reinforcing link between terrorism and narcotics, we will provide force protection for eradication operations. Among other measures taken for a more effective counter-narcotics effort, our National Assembly confirmed a candidate for the post of Minister of Counter-Narcotics just two weeks ago.

Despite the challenges we face, Afghanistan is continuing its reconstruction and its social and economic development. Today, more than 85 per cent of the population is covered by a basic package of health services. Progress in the education sector has enabled nearly 6 million children to gain access to school. Our legal economy has grown by an average of 12 per cent over the past four years, and our per capita gross domestic product has approximately doubled. Five million Afghans have returned home in the hope of a promising future. More than 1,471 kilometres of roads have been built and 737 kilometres remain under construction.

In accordance with our National Action Plan for Women, Afghan women continue to assume a greater role in the social, political and economic life of the country. Our citizens enjoy unprecedented rights. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the challenges in various sectors and remain committed to addressing them resolutely.

To consolidate and advance our gains, we will finalize the Afghan National Development Strategy in the weeks to come. We welcome the upcoming Paris conference, to take place in June 2008, at which we will launch the Strategy, review the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and discuss the way forward with our international partners. We are working closely with the Government of France in preparation for the Conference.

The people of Afghanistan continue to live under difficult humanitarian conditions. The situation has been exacerbated with the onset of the harshest winter conditions in more than 30 years, which have caused more than 900 fatalities, with hundreds of people suffering from severe frostbite. The severe weather has also devastated our livestock, which is the main source of livelihood for vulnerable families in remote parts of Afghanistan. While expressing gratitude to the humanitarian community for providing emergency aid in the worst-affected provinces, we appeal for urgent delivery of additional humanitarian assistance.

In this connection, we welcome UNAMA's continued coordinating role in ensuring the timely and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, as well as its readiness to assist the Government of Afghanistan to create conditions conducive to the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of our fellow Afghans from abroad.

The role of the United Nations remains vital for the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. We look forward to the adoption in the coming days of a resolution that will extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. The extension of the mandate will reflect the continuing commitment of the United Nations and the international community to Afghanistan. We are hopeful that it will also mark the beginning of a strengthened, better structured and more effective United Nations role in Afghanistan. The need for greater coordination of the international community's reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan is ever more evident. In this regard, we underscore the importance of an enhanced coordinating role for the United Nations in consolidating the international community's support and assistance to Afghanistan into a cross-alliance effort. Such coordination is necessary to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of international engagement in and assistance to Afghanistan.

Before concluding, I would like to express my appreciation to the United Nations and the international community for their support towards the achievement of lasting peace, security and stability in Afghanistan. Together, we have come a long way, but our mission has yet to be accomplished. With greater coordination and closer cooperation, we will successfully conclude the journey which we jointly embarked upon more than six years ago.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

First of all, let me thank you, Mr. President, for convening this debate.

The European Union welcomes the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2008/159) and the briefing given by Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno. We support the recommendations on the future activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), especially the strengthening of UNAMA's central role in coordinating the overall international effort in Afghanistan, in close cooperation with the EU and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Let me add that we welcome the appointment of Kai Eide as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. We look forward to working closely with him.

We look forward to the renewal of UNAMA's mandate, which will reaffirm the international communities support for increased international

cohesion in our collective efforts to support the Government of Afghanistan.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to long-term support for the people and the Government of Afghanistan and the core principles of promoting Afghan leadership, good governance, responsibility and ownership, and fostering the development of a democratic, secure and sustainable Afghan State with respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The European Union supports the initiative by the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, which met in Tokyo on 5 and 6 February, to arrange an international conference in Paris in June to review progress in the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, reaffirm the commitment of the international community to Afghanistan and discuss the way forward. In this context, the European Union would like to underline once again its strong support for a comprehensive approach. The European Union calls on the Government of Afghanistan to make further progress on human rights and good governance, including through the establishment of an independent mechanism on senior appointments, the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy and the approval of a media law consistent with freedom of expression.

The European Union remains committed to working with the Government of Afghanistan to strengthen its human rights institutions and mechanisms. The European Union recalls its urgent appeal to halt any future executions, to re-establish a de facto moratorium on the use of the death penalty and to enhance the implementation of the transitional justice action plan.

The European Union underlines its continued engagement in Afghanistan, including through the bilateral cooperation programmes of EU member States and through the EU's assistance strategy, which contains a substantial multi-year commitment until 2013 and which focuses on governance and the rule of law — particularly on the judiciary and the police — and on rural development and health. The European Union looks forward to the finalization, launch and implementation of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy and welcomes the participatory process that this has involved to date.

The European Union reaffirms its support for elections in Afghanistan. The EU remains committed to working with the Afghan Government to ensure free and fair elections in 2009 and 2010. The EU reaffirms that it is for the Afghan Government to decide on the format and timing of the elections. We call on the Afghan Government to ensure that such decisions are made in good time, to allow for adequate preparations.

The EU welcomes the progress of the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL Afghanistan) towards full deployment at the central, regional and provincial levels. The mission is supporting the development of the Afghan police force under local ownership, with respect for human rights and operating within the framework of the rule of law. The EU remains committed to addressing the multiple challenges lying ahead, in close cooperation with the Afghan authorities and international partners. The European Union expresses its readiness to consider further enhancement of its engagement, particularly in the spheres of the police and the wider rule of law, in line with the adoption by the Afghan authorities of the National Justice Programme.

The European Union, underlining its overall coherence of objectives with the United Nations and NATO on the basis of the Afghanistan Compact, reaffirms its readiness to work closely with UNAMA and the International Security Assistance Force, inter alia through EUPOL Afghanistan, in order to strengthen the overall coordination of the international community in Afghanistan. The European Union will continue closely to follow developments with regard to Afghanistan, including at the forthcoming NATO summit in Bucharest.

The European Union will keep its policy towards Afghanistan under review in the coming months, in advance of the Paris conference.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia appreciates the Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan. We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all who work within the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). We thank Mr. Guéhenno and his team, both here and in the field.

We welcome very much the Secretary-General's appointment of Kai Eide as Special Representative, and we look forward to working closely with him.

This open debate on Afghanistan is timely. It arrives at a time when the international community is

refocusing on the issues of Afghanistan. Of course, I note in particular the upcoming Bucharest summit, which will involve discussion of a comprehensive political/military plan by NATO and non-NATO troop-contributing nations. I am pleased to hear today that the Secretary-General will be attending. Also, of course, as has been mentioned, there is the very important upcoming Paris Conference, which will provide an opportunity for a two-year review of the Afghanistan Compact — in other words, of the broader nation-building task.

I cannot stress enough that the international community as a whole has real and enduring interests in Afghanistan's stability. Afghanistan remains front line in global efforts to defeat terrorism — a threat affecting all countries that support democracy, secularism and moderation. No member of the international community can afford to see Afghanistan succumb again to the forces of extremism and ideological fundamentalism. International success in Afghanistan is clearly a measure of resolve in global efforts on terrorism and is certainly viewed that way by Al-Qaida and other extremist groups.

There have been hard-won gains on stabilization over the past seven years — and I was pleased to hear them referred to by the Ambassador of Afghanistan today — but again, as he said, unless we sustain and reinvigorate international efforts, not just for security tasks, but also for reconstruction and development, progress will be undone. It is essential that we continue to build the capacity of the Government of Afghanistan so that it has the tools to address the challenges the people of Afghanistan will face in the short, medium and long terms.

Australia has recently increased its commitment to capacity-building, with the addition of an operational mentoring and liaison team to provide training and guidance to the Afghan National Army.

The Secretary-General is right to note in his report that there is a clear need for more resources and a more coordinated, integrated approach by the international community to tackling Afghanistan's challenges. That includes coordination of our military and non-military efforts and coordination of our efforts across different provinces and regions, not only by NATO and its International Security Assistance Force partners, but also by the United Nations and other international actors.

We must all be prepared to work towards the same objectives to achieve real success, especially when addressing complex issues such as counter-narcotics. It also means more commitments without caveats and greater focus on deploying resources to where the stabilization challenges are most acute, in particular in the South.

Strengthening United Nations engagement in Afghanistan is crucial to progress on stabilization and establishing the longer-term conditions for peace and security. We encourage increased United Nations engagement, not only in Kabul but also at the provincial level, including, importantly, through a United Nations presence — UNAMA and United Nations agencies — in the South, including Uruzgan.

Special Representative Eide will have the important task of communicating to the people of Afghanistan the strong commitment of the United Nations and its Members to the people and the Government of Afghanistan, and our united efforts to foster stability and development throughout the country. As the Secretary-General notes in his report,

> "[t]he guiding principle of UNAMA activities is to reinforce Afghan leadership and strengthen international cohesion in support of that leadership" (*S/2008/159, para. 64*).

In partnership with the Afghan Government, Mr. Eide also has a key role in providing leadership and direction to the efforts of the United Nations, especially to ensure effective coordination of international humanitarian and development activities and their extension to all parts of the country.

Australia is making a major contribution to the international community's efforts in Afghanistan through military and non-military contributions. We have some 1,000 troops focused in Uruzgan province, working in partnership with the Dutch forces. We have committed $450 million in reconstruction, development and humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan since 2001, and we are examining options for an increased Australian police presence. We will remain committed.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I call on the representative of New Zealand.

Ms. Banks (New Zealand): I thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

New Zealand has been pleased to see progress in Afghanistan, both on the political front and in terms of counter-insurgency operations over the past year, as the Ambassador of Afghanistan reported this morning, but the overall situation does remain of concern. The security situation, especially in the South and the East, seriously hampers development and limits the reach of the Afghan Government. Opium production is undermining Afghanistan's future. There is a need for much greater effort to develop alternative sustainable livelihoods.

We see security, governance, development and reconciliation of the various factions in Afghanistan as the four key areas of focus for the Afghan Government, acting with the support of the international community. To a significant extent, those four areas of focus are interdependent. The relative weight given to each is important. We believe that, in the context of a comprehensive approach, there is a need to rebalance, giving added weight to political reconciliation, governance and development.

Since 2001, New Zealand has contributed military personnel to Afghanistan and provides a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyan province. New Zealand personnel also support the International Security Assistance Force headquarters and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as police training and mentoring in Bamyan. Alongside those contributions to security, New Zealand contributes to other priority areas of the Afghanistan Compact, such as rural livelihood programmes, education and health services, and capacity development of provincial governmental and non-governmental and civil society organizations. We support the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission through a core contribution. All programming seeks to empower women, as we see women's participation as a key to achieving peace and security.

New Zealand endorses the importance attached by the Secretary-General in his report to assistance with the building of local governance structures, which is a priority for the Government of Afghanistan. We also welcome the readiness he has signalled for the United Nations to play a more central role in the coordination of international aid and to help promote political reconciliation in Afghanistan. The role of the new Special Representative, Mr. Kai Eide, will take on added importance as we enter that new phase in the struggle to secure Afghanistan's future, and we wish him well on his assignment.

In closing, while we welcome the progress in Afghanistan in recent years, we also appreciate that the international community needs to remain committed to sustained efforts for Afghanistan to have a positive future.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I give the floor to the representative of Spain.

Mr. De Palacio España (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I wish at the outset to align myself with the statement made by the representative of Slovenia on behalf of the presidency of the European Union. I also thank the Secretary-General and Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno most sincerely for the presentation of the report.

Spain is grateful for the opportunity afforded to it its delegation to participate in this open debate, which allows me to reiterate Spain's commitment — especially following the recent elections in my country, through which the electorate's trust in our Government was affirmed — to a secure, stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan that is free from the threat of terrorism and living in peace and close cooperation with its neighbours.

Spain believes that the international community should continue to focus its efforts on the fundamental goal of consolidating a sustainable political system that generates sufficient consensus among the Afghan people and is able on its own to ensure the country's security.

We support the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Kai Eide as his new Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I convey to Mr. Eide my sincere congratulations and the support of our Government, so that he can contribute to strengthening the political leadership of the United Nations and the coordination among all the international actors in Afghanistan and with the Afghan Government itself.

As it always has, Spain believes that the United Nations must continue to play a central role in the process of stabilizing and rebuilding Afghanistan. In order to do that, we must further increase UNAMA's coverage and presence so that it can carry out its functions throughout the territory of Afghanistan. In

that regard, we support the efforts that could be made together with the international community in providing advice on controlling the production of narcotics.

In order to be effective, we must continue to follow a comprehensive approach that, while not undermining the important aspect of security, is increasingly focused on the political and civilian dimensions of Afghanistan's reconstruction — namely, promoting good governance, the rule of law, human rights and social and economic development, as well as ensuring that the Afghan Government gradually assumes its responsibilities.

I should now like to dwell on that point in order to reiterate the European Union's appeal for the restoration of the de facto moratorium on the death penalty and the suspension of the future imposition of capital punishment in Afghanistan.

We are pleased to note that the Afghanistan National Development Strategy is about to be adopted, which should serve as the framework of reference for ensuring that international assistance responds to the priorities established by the Afghan Government. Among those priorities, it is our view that the Afghanization of the security forces — the army and the police — should have priority attention. Likewise, efforts should be stepped up to extend the Afghan Government's authority throughout the whole of its territory by strengthening provincial and local institutions and training and building the capacity of public officials and civil servants, thereby taking decisive steps towards improving good governance at the local level and combating corruption.

We believe that the international conference to be held in Paris should undertake an analysis of what has been achieved to date in political terms and not be just another donor conference. That should make it possible to provide the comprehensive approach to which I have referred while reaffirming the leadership of the United Nations and encouraging the Afghan Government to assume its responsibilities. The Paris conference should also lead to decisive steps towards strengthening international coordination in setting priorities for the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact.

Spain supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to renew UNAMA's mandate for another 12 months under the current terms. There will be time ahead to consider whether there is a need for changes to the mandate. In order to do that, the new Special Representative will have to assess the situation on the ground. In that connection, it will be especially important to support the upcoming elections — upon which the credibility of the system will depend — and to expand coordination with the International Security Assistance Force.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Hyun Chong (Republic of Korea): Since the adoption of the Bonn Agreement, in December 2001, and despite many continuing challenges, Afghanistan has achieved important political progress, culminating in the first-ever direct presidential election, in October 2004, and the parliamentary elections of 2005. The international community must continue to work closely with Afghanistan to ensure that those successes have a lasting impact. While much has been accomplished, many challenges still lie ahead of us. It would be presumptuous to believe that our work is nearing completion. My delegation feels that 2008 is a critical year for achieving comprehensive peace and security in Afghanistan.

The Republic of Korea acknowledges that the deteriorating security situation, compounded by a resurgence of the Taliban and other extremist groups as well as an increase in terror attacks and criminal drug trafficking, hampers not only the reconstruction process but also the implementation of Afghanistan's National Development Strategy as a whole.

My delegation is deeply concerned about the continuing instability in certain areas of the country. The gravity of the situation is underlined by cases of abduction and murder of Afghan and foreign civilians, including the Taliban's 2007 kidnapping of 23 citizens of the Republic of Korea, two of whom were subsequently killed. In addition, we strongly condemn the recent spate of terror attacks, including those near Kandahar last month and in Kabul in January, which were directed against civilians, including many women and children.

That overall lack of security is also hindering the return of Afghan refugees to their homeland. Because of this, only 5,000 Afghan refugees returned home in all of 2007. That can be compared with the 5,000 refugees returning daily during the peak of refugee returns in 2004.

In taking note of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in Afghanistan, we agree that re-establishing lasting security requires a multidimensional strategy coordinating military, police, political and economic and social activities. Essential to the success of that strategy are the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), working in close coordination with the Government of Afghanistan and the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. Another important factor will be enhanced coordination and cooperation between the central and provincial governments, so that security policies at the local level will be more effective.

We are also concerned about the increasing threat that drug trafficking poses to the national security, social development and overall governance of Afghanistan. Poppy cultivation reached yet another record high in 2007 — up more than a third from 2006. Until the Afghan people can find other sources of income, many will continue to engage in that criminal business, which also breeds corruption at the highest levels. The Republic of Korea expects that Afghanistan will continue to work towards fully implementing the National Drug Control Strategy presented by its Government at the London Conference. We stand ready to join international support for the Strategy, as evidenced by our contribution of $200,000 to the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund last year.

The Republic of Korea is encouraged by the recent efforts of the United Nations and the Afghan Ministry of Education to build nearly 300 new schools and train 48,000 teachers in preparation for the upcoming school year. Nearly 6.2 million children are expected to attend school this year — up from 5.7 million in 2007. However, challenges remain with regard to gender disparity and the number of students who complete primary school.

The Republic of Korea has strongly supported the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. Building upon our contribution of approximately $60 million in grant aid to Afghanistan between 2001 and 2005, we have set aside $20 million for the subsequent three-year period for projects focusing on human resource development, agricultural and rural area development and public administration efficiency. In addition, reconstruction and medical units from my country have been contributing to the Afghan reconstruction process since their deployment in February 2002. We pledge to continue our commitment to the reconstruction, development and stabilization of Afghanistan in the years ahead.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno for giving a comprehensive briefing on the situation in Afghanistan this morning. Japan also welcomes very warmly the appointment of Mr. Kai Eide as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and expresses its commitment to supporting him in meeting important challenges.

This year marks the halfway point in the implementation process of the Afghanistan Compact. As Chair of the Group of 8 (G-8) this year, Japan hosted the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) last month to review the progress to date and to discuss the way forward. As the participants noted, there have been tangible achievements in the reconstruction of the country since launching the Compact. This could not have been done without the combination of the best efforts of the Afghan Government and the commitment of the international community.

With the finalization of the Afghan National Development Strategy now in sight, the nation-building of the country is expected to shift from the reconstruction phase to the development phase. Japan is fully committed to supporting the efforts of the Government and people of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, various challenges lie ahead on this path.

The security situation is most worrying. To create stability, which is essential for economic development, international forces need to remain committed to the daunting task of eradicating terrorism in the country. Japan applauds the dedicated efforts of many countries in providing forces and personnel.

Success also hinges upon the strengthening of the capability of the Afghan National Security Forces. For Japan's part, I am pleased to report that Japan has rejoined the international fight against terrorism by resuming its refueling activities in the Indian Ocean.

Japan also attaches importance to the disbandment of illegal armed groups as a means to improve the long-term security situation. We are

pleased to note that 161 illegal armed groups have been disbanded to date. Registration of firearms has been progressing as well. The establishment of a unit for the disbandment of illegal armed groups in the Ministry of the Interior will also be a step forward in nationalizing that process. Building on this progress, disbandment operations must be further enhanced and accelerated. Japan remains committed to supporting the efforts of the Afghan Government in that area as well.

Another area of concern is narcotics. As the recent survey of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime indicated, the situation of opium poppy cultivation will continue to remain worrisome this year. We welcome that the Tokyo JCMB meeting endorsed the Afghan Government's implementation plan of counter-narcotics measures, placing greater focus on actions at the provincial level.

To address these challenges, a holistic and comprehensive approach is essential. Japan has extended $1.36 billion in assistance to Afghanistan in line with its own holistic initiative called the "Consolidation of Peace in Afghanistan", which encompasses the political process, security, governance and reconstruction. As a part of these efforts, Japan recently announced an additional $110 million assistance, focusing on projects in border areas shared with Pakistan and Iran. A project to enhance the capacity of the Afghan Government for border control is also included.

Coordination is, of course, another requirement. For efficient and effective assistance, coordination of assistance activities is of vital importance. The coordination of the military strategy, the political process and the development strategy is needed to ensure that each element successfully takes root. The role of the United Nations here is significant, now more than ever, for coordinating between the efforts of the Afghan Government and international actors. We very much look forward to working closely with the newly appointed Special Representative in this regard.

As for the mandate of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, we stress the importance of the smooth extension of the mandate at this critical juncture to demonstrate that the international community is united in supporting the activities of the United Nations. Japan supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General to extend the current mandate for 12 months. We also welcome the Secretary-General's approach, namely, to focus on several key areas, including the readiness to take a further coordination role within the existing mandate.

Japan, in its capacity as Chair of the G-8, will pursue synergy between the discussion in the G-8 summit process, as well as those reviews and discussions taking place in the United Nations and other forums, so that we may better support the efforts to consolidate peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m. and resumed at 3.05 p.m.